About Accreditation

The accreditation process determines, in the public interest, the technical competence and integrity of organisations offering testing, inspection, calibration, verification and certification services. It operates across all market sectors, providing an impartial assessment against internationally recognised standards, which

- provides a transparent approach to conformity assessment in all sectors
- supports Regulations across a growing number of policy areas.

About the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA)

EA has been appointed by the European Commission to manage the accreditation infrastructure within the EU, EFTA and Candidate countries. It is a non-profit association responsible for defining, harmonising and building consistency in accreditation within the European region, with the aim of reducing barriers to trade and contributing to protecting health, safety and the environment. EA ensures that national accreditation bodies operate in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 765/2008.

Regulation (EC) No 765/2008


The Regulation covers the operation of accreditation in support of testing, inspection, and certification activities (collectively known as conformity assessment) including conformity assessment required by legislation.

Under the Regulation, accreditation, when carried out against the recognised harmonised standards, is regarded as a public authority activity.

EU Member States are required to appoint a single national accreditation body for these activities.
An overview of the European accreditation structure and process

- Peer evaluation (ISO/IEC 17011)
- Regulation (EC) No 765/2008

NABs assess and confirm the technical competence and integrity of organisations offering testing, inspection, calibration, verification and certification services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laboratories</th>
<th>Inspection Bodies</th>
<th>Certification Bodies</th>
<th>Verification Bodies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laboratories (calibration, testing and medical) perform tests and/or calibrations</td>
<td>Bodies that perform inspections of products, installations, etc</td>
<td>Bodies that assess conformity, and certify products, management systems, persons, processes or services</td>
<td>Bodies that carry out validation or verification of greenhouse gas assertions</td>
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</table>

NABs assess compliance with the requirements in international standards, as well as criteria included in Regulations.

Regulators and other users can have confidence that the conformity assessment activity is provided by a competent supplier.

PRODUCT & SERVICE PROVIDERS

Government, purchasers and the consumer have confidence that products and services placed on the market meet specification or legislation.
The EA Multilateral Agreement (MLA)

The EA MLA is an agreement signed between EA accreditation body members to recognise the equivalence, reliability and therefore increased acceptance of results provided by accredited certification, verification, inspection, calibration and testing organisations across Europe. It provides a framework that delivers equal, comparable and reliable accreditation services.

National Accreditation Bodies are admitted to the MLA only after stringent evaluation of their operations by a peer evaluation team to determine continued compliance with ISO/IEC 17011, the internationally recognised standard for accreditation bodies. The MLA process is observed by personnel from the European Commission, national authorities and an EA Advisory Board, which consists of stakeholders and other interested parties in the business and regulatory community.

Supporting the work of the European Commission

Accreditation is gaining increased recognition as an important and practical tool in the delivery of objectives across an increasing range of policy areas.

For example, the Regulation reinforces the requirements for the notification of conformity assessment bodies. Accreditation shall now be used as the preferred means of demonstrating the competence of these bodies.

EA currently supports the following initiatives with Commission services:

- EU ETS Accreditation & Verification Regulation – DG CLIMA
- Regulation (EU)333/2011 – establishing criteria determining when certain types of scrap metal cease to be waste – DG ENV
- Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) – DG ENV
- Regulation (EC) 882/2004 – official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules – DG SANCO
- European Breast Cancer Services Accreditation Project – DG SANCO
- Regulation 445/2011 on a system of certification of entities in charge of maintenance for freight wagons – DG MOVE

EA welcomes the opportunity to assist DGs in the drafting of regulations to ensure that references to standards and accreditation are clear and unambiguous.

Contact details

If you wish to find out more about how accreditation might be of assistance to you in your capacity as a European Commission Official, please contact:

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